My name is Venna and I am a Biology major and Botanical Illustration minor in CALS. I spent half of my life in China and the other half in the United States. I don’t think I have had much international exposure and this is my first time in Europe. My host university was Copenhagen University.

Practical Advice

Visa
The visa process was really easy. There is some very simple paper work. Upon getting all my documentation together, I went to the consulate in New York City and they emailed me the visa within two months.

Packing
I should have remembered to bring an adaptor and it would also be helpful if I brought an extra backpack for traveling. I regret bringing comforters, pillows, and other bedding since they are all provided.

Arrival
Immigration was really easy and took no time at all. My Buddy picked me up at the Copenhagen airport with keys and other practical stuff/information. I had no problem getting to my housing and I really appreciated the Buddy system. The orientation program (science faculty) was very nice. It is on two different campuses for three days. The third day focused on more practical issues of living in Denmark such as obtaining the CPR number but I had already done all of that so I did not find it as relevant.

Orientation is where I met most of my friends, so it is definitely worth it to attend.

Academics

The University
The university is divided into four campuses and it is scattered throughout the city. There are computer labs, wifi, and libraries. There are also a few places where there is free printing and coffee/snacks.

Classes
The course enrollment process was completely online but since I took courses at different faculties, they had different processes. Basically I had to fill out a form with the courses I wanted and either email or submit it on a web page.

I started the exchange with the Danish language course. It is a very nice way to meet people but not really to learn the language. It gave me a purpose for the first couple of weeks at Copenhagen and it also helped me to settle in. The exam was both written and oral. It was actually not all that easy but still manageable.

As the semester started, I took a course in Danish culture. It is a very relaxed class that is graded only on attendance and has may excursions to places around Denmark. I strongly encourage future exchange students to take this because it is really fun. I also took two master level courses: Evolutionary medicine and Population genetics. Evolutionary medicine was the best course I have ever taken. The lecturers were really great and I really loved going to class. Population genetics was less interesting to me. It was quite difficult and I was the only student that did not speak Danish. Overall, however, I think master level classes are much more suitable for exchange students than bachelor level ones. For both of my classes the final
grade was based on an oral exam and a presentation/research paper.

Life Abroad

Language
There is no language problem at all since everyone speaks perfect English in Copenhagen. I live a bit outside of Copenhagen and the neighborhood doesn’t really speak English but even with that I don’t feel the necessity of learning Danish.

Housing
The housing is around the same price as Cornell dorms. I rented through the Copenhagen University Housing Foundation. The only issue I had with them was having to pay rent from January to July, instead of May.

Transportation
I took the metro all the time, so it made sense to just buy a monthly pass for three zones (two zone is enough for most people but I live next to the airport and that’s an extra zone). It costs around 500dkk (~$95). Surprisingly that is actually cheaper than NYC.

Health and Safety
I feel really safe in Denmark and I think that’s one of the best things about this country. Everyone gets a medical insurance card and an assigned doctor upon arrival, so there shouldn’t be much to worry about in terms of health care.

Overall exchange experience

The best thing about my semester abroad was the possibility to learn about a brand new culture and also about myself. It’s really interesting to meet a lot of new people that come from all around the world and hear their views.

The most challenging aspect was facing the unknowns. Everything was so new but also very exciting. It gave me an opportunity to do things that are out of my comfort zone. I know that this semester abroad has really changed me for the better. I feel a lot more mature and open-minded. For future students, I recommend taking some time to explore the city and joining some activities. Don’t over think and just have some fun.